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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th
ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major themes in today's editorials include Iraq's future in 2006, the political discussions and conflicts surrounding parliamentary elections, and the utility of sending international observers to Iraq to review election results.

In its third-page editorial entitled "Happy New Year to the Occupation," independent Al-Fourat described how Iraqi leaders selfishly cooperate with the occupation while Iraqi citizens are threatened by death. In "The New Year," PUK-affiliated Al-Ittihad focuses on the security and stability that all Iraqis crave in the new year. The editorial argues that security is the responsibility of the new government, which must put Iraq's affairs on the right path to prevent a repeat of last year's disasters. In its last-page editorial entitled "The Next Three Years," independent Az-Zaman asserts that after three years in Iraq, conditions remain dreadful for Iraqi citizens. The author raises the question of the next three years, and whether Iraq will be better off, especially after the withdrawal of U.S. forces. END SUMMARY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [1A.](#) "International Committee" (Al-Adala, 1/2)
- [1B.](#) "Elections and International Monitors" (Ad-Dustoor, 1/2)
- [1C.](#) "Forming the Government" (As-Sabah, 1/2)
- [1D.](#) "Division Is Better Than Death Based on Identity" (Al-Bayyna Al-Jadeedah, 1/2)

SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "International Committee"
(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI, published this third page editorial in support of the international committee investigating election results, by Dr. Ali Kleef)

"Those opposing the election results have agreed to resort to an international investigative committee to look into their complaints. There is no doubt that winners also have their complaints, and the international committee will assess and study these objections on the bases of legal standards previously adopted by the IECI, which has confirmed that these complaints will not change the overall election results. If the international committee were to discover major violations in one or two polling centers, it would only be normal to disregard these votes.

"The intervention of the international committee in the electoral process in Iraq will add a further sense of legitimacy and additional confirmation of its compliance with the international standards that were followed by the IECI and ignored by certain parties because they were not presented with results that met their exaggerated expectations. These expectations were supported by an ignorance of laws governing the elections and the work of the IECI. This led some to harshly attack the commission after its refusal to be the scapegoat for the losers.

"This step might convince those who rejected the will of the nation and the initial results since they were the ones who demanded the intervention of the international committee. The initial results have revealed the size of each political entity and unveiled the will of the people. It is unreasonable for some to try and undermine the will of the nation, which has led to a true formula representing the components of Iraqi society that should be accepted and dealt with by all in a positive manner.

"The world witnessed the Iraqi election and it knew that the odds would be on one side or the other based on a sound reading of facts, including the large majority of people whose rights were deprived by the previous regime and were finally granted the chance to have their say in the new government. They certainly had their say in the parliamentary election, which might have annoyed some parties. Surely the arrival of the international committee will confirm the people's decision and support their true representatives."

B. "Elections and International Monitors"

(Ad-Dustoor, independent, published this front-page editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh)

"The arrival of international monitors to follow up and investigate election results might be considered an important step to silence those who want to make the election process a major crisis, rather than a solution for all of Iraqis' problems. Whatever conclusion the international monitors reach, it will not greatly affect that which has been announced already. Followers of the electoral process will not find many violations. The whole process in its final form is almost perfect, and now it will be based on an international point of view.

"While some political entities who questioned the electoral results demanded appeals to be investigated as a main condition for engaging in any political settlement, many accepted these settlements in spite of their extreme stances regarding results, as if the whole process, for them, is about getting posts, ministerial portfolios, and publicity. And some selfish people who opposed the results threatened to set Iraq on fire to provoke a sectarian war.

"Whether political entities accept or refuse the election results, the international monitors' report, which is welcomed by all parties, will have the final say and will silence everyone in an attempt to calm the situation and reinforce the election results, melting away justifications that some publicized for well known reasons."

C. "Forming the Government"

(As-Sabah, Iraqi Media Network, published a front-page editorial by editor in chief Mohammad Abdul-Jabbar about the formation of the next government. The editorial reads in part)

"Forming a government in stable democratic systems depends on electoral rights, which play an essential part. If a party wins enough votes, then it will form the government alone, but if it lacks a majority of votes, then it seeks alliances to form a coalition government. This democratic solution is difficult to implement in a new-born democracy."

D. "Division Is Better Than Death Based on Identity"

(Al-Bayyna Al-Jadeedah, affiliated with the Shiite Political Council, published a front-page unattributed editorial about the delay in forming the government. The editorial reads in part)

"All indications suggest that the formation of the next government will be delayed for a long time because of the illegal demands by groups that work against the United Iraqi Alliance and against electoral rights. All indications suggest that violence and terrorism will increase in the next stage due to the absence of a strong government. We say it frankly: people, especially in southern Iraq, are psychologically prepared for separation in the case of continually increasing violence and unrealistic demands by others. Many people therefore think that division is much better than a united country that is threatened by death."

KHALILZAD